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A. A. Phillips

Boston Mass.

Gen. Agt. Mass. A. A. Society

P. S. I have submitted this letter to the inspection of our friends Steward & Goodell.— S. wishes me to say, further, as illustrative of our views, that Birney & Stanton would accomplish far more for the cause at the head of state Socts. than cooped up in N. Y & at a much less expense. G. wishes me to say, that this subject is immensely important in his estimation & must be brought up for adjustment at the annual meeting in N. Y.— What I had better give you permission to read this letter to the Ex. Com. of your Soc.— You will do so, if you think best. After so much fuss, I now regret, that I did not go a little more into detail— but my only object was to call your attention to the subject & I have not time to revise.

"Verbum sapienti"

W. L. G.

Do not understand us to reproach any body for the course of spasmodic effort which was inevitable during the early history & progress of our cause; but earnestly to desire, that a system of operations may now be entered upon which will give increased energy, & secure lasting stability, to all our movements. You will perceive the whole gist of the thing lies here — can an independent, central power in this country carry out through all its ~~ramifications~~ diversified details, a great moral & political reformation as economically & certainly, as local or State agencies having the power of independent, as well as concerted action could do it?

We insist upon it, that the great ends to all which we aim will never be reached through a national Society alone — The responsibility must be thrown mainly upon State Societies & they must secure the means of independent, vigorous action.

We intend to bring this subject up at the Anniversary for distinct consideration & action, & if these disunited suggestions upon full reflection approve themselves to your judgment, then we hope Massachusetts — abolitionized — reformed Massachusetts will lead, or at least cooperate with us in the correction of what we deem to be serious abuses. In the mean time the communication of your own views would be most acceptable to us.

With very sincere esteem & your fellow laborers in the cause of holy freedom

A. A. Phelps
Gen. Agt.
Mass. A.S. Soc.

W. L. Chaplin
Cor. Sec. & Gen. Agt.
N.Y.S.A.S. Soc.

own limits; & in short of superintending the whole Abolition enterprize in detail, from agents & funds all the way down to petitions within their respective precincts. Nor do we propose or wish to annihilate the parent Soc. Let it live — do good & flourish strong in the affections of the Abolitionists in the land; but then let it operate within reasonable limits — upon well understood rules & for the accomplishment of purposes which can better be secured by its agency, than by that of any other society. There is the department of anti slavery literature & instruction of the national mind — a field sufficiently ample one would think to gratify the most aspiring ambition, & for the full exercise of all the intellect & action which it can command. Let the Committee enter upon that work without delay, & let them promptly receive from the State Societies according to their several ability the necessary means to prosecute the enterprize with spirit & entire success. The supply of anti slavery reading does not yet begin to come into the neighbourhood of the demand. Our board will this very year want at least from $10.000 to $12.000 worth of Abolition facts, thoughts & arguments for distribution over the State — & yet they are not exhausted. Our wheels have again & again been stopped for want of stock in the great work of establishing libraries. But the executive of the parent Soc., although they have had but two solitary agents in the "empire State" for near a year & have actually done nothing to advance our cause, still keep up a continual hoeb for funds; & as often as about once a month flood the community with seathing "circulars" which completely singe the ground all over, so that for months afterwards it is vain to sow or plant!

Wm L. Chaplin

Anti slavery rooms

Utica March 19. 1838

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PHELPS MSS.

My Dear Sir,

I write at the suggestion of our friend, Alvan Steward, & in the strictest sense confidentially: We (that is to say the executive committee of the N.Y. State A.S. Soc.) are not exactly well pleased with the course pursued by the Ex. com. of the A.A.S. Society. Not that they are chargable with intentional wrong, but our objections lie against the system or policy by which they are governed. Their notions also appear to run in the channel of a consolidated government, or central power which is not only to overshadow all secondary institutions, but must absolutely in the end absorb the last remnant of their appropriate resources. On the other hand, while we abjure the hateful heresy of Nullification, we do hold fast to the doctrine of "State rights" & in a certain sense, or at least to the idea of a limited State sovereignty. But without a figure.

The operations of the american & State Societies appear to us improperly to clash with each other. We cannot tell what your experience has been; but we constantly find our plans thwarted — the efforts of our agents defeated & the collection of funds well nigh impossible! A long chapter of grievances might be put down here, but scolding is an infamous business, let us not be guilty of it. Our remedy for the evils of which we complain, is very simple. We propose, that the State Socts. should severally assume the responsibility of employing, directing & paying all the necessary agents within their